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General and complete disarmament: promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

Report of the Secretary-General**

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** The information contained herein was received after submission of the main report.

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Cuba

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Cuba considers the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/63, of 22 November 2002, entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation", to be extremely significant.

This resolution, submitted by the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, reflects the vital importance which the overwhelming majority of States attach to multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Cuba played an active role in the preparation and promotion of this new resolution in the First Committee of the General Assembly, considering it a timely initiative in the current international situation.

From the very outset, the United Nations established in its Charter that its purpose was to "take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

This was the basis of multilateralism as a means of solving international problems and as a principle which should govern both relations between States, especially in the area of peacekeeping, and the essential movement towards global disarmament.

Recently, the Millennium Declaration, adopted by the Heads of State and Government on 8 September 2000, reiterated that the responsibility for managing threats to international peace and security must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally and that, as the most universal and most representative organization in the world, the United Nations must play the central role.

We are still a long way from the global peace, stability and cooperation that we expected to materialize after the supposed end of the cold war and the establishment of the United Nations.

The emergence of a unipolar world, in which only one super-Power has the military capacity to dominate the international scene, has not brought greater international security. Instead, it has created a situation in which this one super-Power holds hegemony and intervenes overtly or covertly under the guise of multilateral action, leaving weaker countries in a situation of insecurity and making egotism the rule of conduct for international relations in an attempt to deny the principles which have been the basis for the existence of the United Nations: equality of States, national sovereignty, self-determination, non-intervention, non-recourse to the threat or use of force and peaceful settlement of disputes.

It is therefore disturbing that multilateralism in the area of disarmament continues to be eroded, primarily as a result of unilateral actions taken by the global super-Power. The current situation with regard to disarmament and arms control is a clear reflection of this current crisis of multilateralism.

Astonished, indignant and powerless, the international community watched the unjustifiable war unleashed against Iraq under the leadership of the United States of America and the subsequent occupation of that country, which constituted a serious threat to the credibility of the United Nations. The pretext for this war was the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; no attempt was made to seek a multilateral solution to this problem.

Over two thirds of the members and three of the permanent members of the Security Council tried for weeks to prevent the war, warned of the potential consequences which have now become a reality and offered various solutions based on the fact that any unilateral attack would be a violation of the Charter and of international law and on the need to fully comply with the provisions of Security Council resolutions through peaceful means. Despite clear progress, however, the United Nations inspections were halted.

By totally ignoring the United Nations, the unilateral aggression against and occupation of Iraq are further aggravating the ongoing crisis in the multilateral system. Renewed strategic interests in domination have also worsened and assumed new, more dangerous dimensions.

Cuba considers that respect for the principles of international law and for the Charter of the United Nations is the only viable guarantee of international peace and security. The world must be regulated by a collective security system based on cooperation which would provide guarantees for all of us. This system cannot be replaced by the law of the jungle or by doctrines which violate the letter and the spirit of the Charter.

In the Final Document adopted at the Thirteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held this year in Kuala Lumpur, the Heads of State and Government of the countries members of the Movement expressed their strong concern at the growing resort to unilateralism and unilaterally imposed prescriptions and, in that context, stressed that multilateralism and solutions agreed by all nations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, provided the only sustainable method of addressing disarmament and international security issues.

In that context, the Heads of State and Government of the Movement welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/63, entitled "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation".

Cuba attaches great importance to paragraph 1 of resolution 57/63, which explicitly states that multilateralism is the core principle in negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is therefore unfortunate that some countries have sought to lessen the importance of multilateralism; multilateralism is the only possible means of achieving the goal of general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament.

As a sign of the clear political will of the Cuban Government and of its commitment to an effective disarmament process guaranteeing world peace, Cuba ratified the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), which it had signed in 1995, on 23 October 2002.

With Cuba's ratification, the Treaty entered into force throughout its zone of application and Latin America and the Caribbean were declared the first inhabited area of the planet to be completely free of nuclear weapons.

Cuba also acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on 4 November 2002. Pursuant to the commitments which it assumed in taking this step, Cuba is currently negotiating with the International Atomic Energy Agency the relevant Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol thereto, which strengthens the Agreement; this process will soon be completed within the time period established by the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Cuba's decision to become a State party to these two treaties has implications beyond its national interests and is a sign of the Cuban Government's political will and commitment to the promotion and strengthening of the United Nations, multilateralism and international treaties in the area of disarmament and arms control. It also represents a contribution to the international community's efforts to promote peace, security and a world free of the great danger posed by the very existence of nuclear weapons.

Cuba considers that the only way of overcoming the initial defects of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its selective and discriminatory nature is to achieve the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons, which would guarantee the security of all on an equal footing.

Cuba has declared that, pursuant to the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the legitimate right of States to have full access to nuclear energy for peaceful ends must be respected. There must be an end to unilateral restrictive measures on the exchange of scientific and technological equipment, materials and information for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The world super-Power, on the other hand, is adopting an alarming unilateralist attitude; it has forced the revocation of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, prevented the inclusion of key proposals in the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and is moving towards the deployment of a national anti-missile defence system and hardening its opposition to the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In August 2001, the United States blocked negotiations on the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, and in November 2001 it came close to causing the collapse of the Fifth Review Conference of the Parties to that same Convention.

In May 2002, it suddenly unleashed a destabilizing process in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, using methods of financial blackmail to prevent the then Director-General of the Organization, Mauricio Bustani, from continuing to perform his mandate.

It is unacceptable that any country, however powerful, should on the basis of its narrow national interests impose its whim in terms of who may or may not hold leading positions in an international organization.

Cuba has noted with great concern the statement by the United States at the First Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, held this year, that we should have no illusions regarding the effectiveness of the

Convention and that, in the final analysis, the absence of evidence that a State has failed to comply with its provisions does not exempt it from being accused before the international community of violating the Convention.

At a time when the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention are making every effort to promote its universality, trying to encourage States which have not yet done so to accede to it, it is strange that one of the States Parties should be questioning the effectiveness of that multilaterally-negotiated legal instrument.

Cuba believes that the Convention has shown itself to be an effective instrument, and that it can continue to be so if all States Parties work in good faith towards that goal, setting aside opportunist, arrogant and unilateral positions.

Cuba reiterates its firm rejection of any insinuation that it would be legitimate to take unilateral action against States allegedly failing to comply with international legal instruments in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, particularly in cases where there is no evidence of such non-compliance.

It should be recalled that General Assembly resolution 57/63 explicitly calls on States parties to the relevant instruments on weapons of mass destruction to consult and cooperate among themselves in resolving their concerns with regard to cases of non-compliance.

It also calls on States to refrain from resorting or threatening to resort to unilateral actions or directing unverified non-compliance accusations against one another to resolve their concerns.

The revised nuclear posture of the United States, revealed in early 2003, broadens the potential uses of nuclear weapons. It includes non-nuclear weapon States among the possible targets and seeks to legitimize indefinite possession of such weapons.

The new strategic defence doctrines of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its concepts of international security, based on the promotion and development of military alliances and nuclear deterrence policies, which even extend the scope of the right to the use or threat of force in international relations outside its geographical area of action, are matters of concern for all humankind and particularly for the poor and non-aligned countries.

Cuba strongly rejects the so-called "doctrine of pre-emptive attack", which is clearly contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations. In the words of resolution 57/63, Cuba considers that a resort to unilateral actions by Member States in resolving their security concerns would jeopardize international peace and security and undermine confidence in the international security system as well as the foundations of the United Nations itself.

Cuba believes that military doctrines based on the possession of nuclear weapons are unsustainable and unacceptable. No country or group of countries should be allowed to have a monopoly on nuclear weapons. Even less acceptable is the continuing development, qualitative and quantitative, of nuclear weapons by the exclusive club of nuclear Powers recognized by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The nuclear-weapon States have a legal obligation not just to pursue but also to conclude in good faith negotiations aimed at achieving complete nuclear disarmament under a strict and effective system of international control.

In line with the view expressed by all States Members of the United Nations in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, Cuba considers nuclear disarmament to be the top disarmament priority.

Paragraph 50 of the Final Document remains fully relevant, in that it draws attention to the need for the urgent negotiation of agreements leading to: cessation of the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear-weapon systems; cessation of the production of all types of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, and of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes; and a comprehensive, phased programme with agreed time frames, whenever feasible, for progressive and balanced reduction of stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, leading to their ultimate and complete elimination at the earliest possible time.

The Millennium Declaration includes the express commitment to "strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers". Cuba favours holding such a conference as soon as possible.

Preventing unilateralism from becoming entrenched and the role of the United Nations from being eroded is a collective responsibility. It begins with measures as basic as ensuring that specialized disarmament bodies are provided with sufficient resources and meeting time.

The First Committee must have the necessary meeting time in order to carry out its important work. Cuba opposes the attempts by some countries to further reduce the current duration of the regular session of the First Committee, which is already shorter than that of the other Main Committees.

The United Nations Disarmament Commission, the only universal deliberative body specializing in disarmament, should cease to be a formal forum and should resume its important role within the multilateral system in order to continue negotiations so that progress can be made towards concrete results in the area of disarmament. The necessary resources must therefore be provided so that it can function appropriately and effectively.

Cuba reiterates the fundamental importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral forum for negotiations in the area of disarmament. It is therefore regrettable that the Conference's substantive work remains bogged down and that it still cannot even set up an ad hoc committee to negotiate on the issue of nuclear disarmament.

Such an ad hoc committee should be established as a matter of urgency and mandated to begin negotiations on a gradual programme of nuclear disarmament, with the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons within an agreed time frame and under strict international supervision.

Cuba hopes that the General Assembly, at its fifty-eighth session, will be able once again to adopt a resolution on the full exercise of multilateralism in the area of disarmament, and that it will receive broad support from Member States.

Qatar

[Original: English]
[22 July 2003]

The concerned authority in the State of Qatar indicated that it would "support the issue of the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation".